

years—that is how gradual it is. It would go from 66 to 67 to 68 and end at 69—over 11 years. It is 3 months a year that the increase would occur, and it decreases the annual cost-of-living adjustment if it exceeds 1 percent. When inflation goes above 1 percent, the cost-of-living adjustment will kick in. So if you have rampant inflation, such as 2 or 3 percent, there will be a cost-of-living adjustment. My bill with Senator KYL will make the Social Security trust fund solvent through 2085 without raising taxes or cutting core benefits.

Saving our programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, will require bipartisan leadership. We cannot do it with one party. We cannot do it with one party because of the 30-second ad. We must do it together.

I know my time is up, and my colleague from Arkansas is on the Senate floor. I would just say that we could cut \$416 billion, nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ trillion over 10 years, if we would start addressing just Social Security right now. Let's do it with bipartisan leadership, starting with the President, the Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, and the House, which is controlled by Republicans. We will have to do it together. Let's do it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, on Monday morning the country was presented with President Obama's budget proposal for the fiscal year. If you were only to listen to the President and his advisers, you would think this proposal is great for the Nation. The Acting Budget Director says the President's budget "makes the right investments." The head of the President's National Economic Council used several sports metaphors to make the case that "the President has very much stepped up to the plate," and the President himself said his budget makes "some tough choices in order to put the country back on a more sustainable fiscal path." The reason they are so excited about this proposal is that they believe, in an election year, they have offered every ally something to woo their support. This budget proposal truly does try to be everything for everyone. The problem is that no one wins with it.

When you scratch the surface of this proposal, the shine quickly wears off. The deficit reduction claims the administration throws out to defend this proposal simply do not hold water. You cannot claim \$1 trillion in cuts that Congress pushed through during the debt ceiling debate as new cuts, nor can you say with all honesty that \$850 billion in war savings are real cuts. This money was never going to be spent in the first place.

When you get down to it, President Obama was never serious about his pledge to cut the deficit in half by the end of his first term. Like every budget this administration has proposed, this

one was written with red ink. The deficit spending proposed in the President's fiscal year 2013 budget topped \$1 trillion again. This is simply an unsustainable rate of spending.

On Monday, the President's team was doing a full-scale PR push for that budget. At one point during the rollout, a reporter asked the President's top economic aides what ever happened to that pledge the President had made to the American people. Gone from their answers was the tough talk about making difficult decisions and facing challenges we have long neglected. Instead, his advisers were left to pull out the old standby excuse that the President's team simply did not realize how bad the economy actually was when they first took over.

Clearly, they still do not realize it now. Not only does the President's budget ignore the very real disarray our fiscal house is in, it makes it worse. Since President Obama took office, our national debt has shot up 42 percent. Under President Obama's watch, the national debt has jumped to a jaw-dropping \$15.1 trillion. This is the fourth year in a row that the budget would run a deficit above \$1.29 trillion. When it comes to fiscal responsibility, this is not a record of which to be proud.

America deserves better than a collection of tax hikes, phony savings, and additional debt. The President's budget proposal is bad for seniors, as it takes no steps to protect and strengthen Medicare and Social Security. It will hurt the chances of an economic recovery through tax hikes and will add \$11 trillion more to our already staggering national debt in a 10-year period. We cannot continue to keep going down this road. America's fiscal health is at stake. We have to stop spending more than we take in. If not, we risk going in the direction of Greece, Portugal, Italy, and other European countries that have spent their way to the brink of default.

As we head into the final year of President Obama's first term, we have already witnessed the most rapid increase in debt under any U.S. President. With our national debt already the size of our entire economy, the President has proposed a budget that calls for hundreds of billions of dollars in new spending. If we follow through with this budget, deficit spending would exceed \$600 billion every year but one over the next decade. Our national debt would grow to \$18.7 trillion.

President Obama would like you to believe that if we simply raise taxes we can solve all of our fiscal problems. A recent CBO report shows that spending is the primary cause of our fiscal crisis and supports spending cuts rather than tax increases to reverse the trend. But the President is holding steadfast to his desire to raise taxes as an answer. The President's failed policy of borrowing, spending, and taxing is just what the CBO is warning us to avoid. It has not worked in the past, and it will not work in the future.

Washington does not have a revenue problem, Washington has a spending problem. The fact that President Obama still believes we can tax our way out of the problem reveals a huge disconnect with the American people. When it comes to our country's budget, Americans have a right to expect accountability, honesty, and responsibility. This proposal has none of those.

If President Obama refuses to acknowledge and address the very real economic crisis facing our country, let's show America that we will. We can do so by rejecting the White House's proposal and passing a responsible budget that puts our Nation back on a fiscally responsible path.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, now what is the pending business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in a period of morning business.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I wish to claim 10 minutes to speak on behalf of a bill which I hope will return to the Senate today, which is the surface transportation reauthorization bill. I hope we take it up. I hope we actually vote on it, and I hope there are not a lot of extraneous amendments that are not relevant to getting America moving again, creating jobs that result in public safety, a better environment, and people actually working. What I like about the surface transportation reauthorization bill is that, in effect, this could be the only vehicle we have that is a version of the infrastructure bank, a topic on which I know the Presiding Officer has worked assiduously.

We need an infrastructure bank. We need to have jobs in construction to build highways, byways, subways, and we can do it, but it looks as though it will be difficult to do. In the meantime, we have a regular order bill, the surface transportation reauthorization bill. This is the bill that Congress reauthorizes every couple of years to do construction on highways, byways, and beltways, and at the same time in the very important area of mass transit, something the gentelady from New York knows is important since she has one of the busiest subways in America. We have a busy subway called the Metro, and I am going to talk about that in a minute.

Right now we must pass this long-term transportation bill to put people back to work, repair our aging roads and bridges and tunnels, keep the public safe, and lower our carbon footprint. This is a bipartisan bill, and it is

actually paid for and meets a sense of a frugal government but smart spending. It is time to show the American people that we can govern, that we can actually pass legislation in a regular order, conducting ourselves with civility as we debate our amendments.

We have to keep America rolling. This is a jobs bill. One of the best ways to put people to work is through infrastructure projects. It builds America and builds our economy. This bill will contribute to saving over 1.8 million jobs and actually creates new jobs in construction, in the supply chain, and in design and engineering, and all the vendors it supports.

In my own home State we estimate that 10,000 jobs will be created if we pass this bill. I cannot speak about this in a more firm and insistent way. When I met with the building trades guys, it was a bleak conversation with the unemployment rate in construction still sky-high. This bill will jump-start the economy. All the people who analyze this type of data say that for every dollar we spend on infrastructure construction, we get \$2 in economic output back into our economy through the multiplier effect.

Let's do an inventory of why this is a compelling need. We know we have a high unemployment rate and that we are running big debts and we are running deficits. One of the ways to reduce the debt and the deficit is to have people working where they are paying revenue in to the government. We also have an infrastructure deficit. Do you know that right now 700,000 bridges are structurally deficient? That is not a fact, that is a danger zone. Fifty percent of our roads are in need of serious repair. More than 4 million people travel over these bridges every day. This would address that kind of problem.

Then there is this whole issue of, again, roads, highways, byways, and beltways. There is also the issue of mass transit. One of the parts of the bill I am most proud of is creating Federal safety standards for the metro systems nationwide.

On June 22, 2009, there was a terrible accident in the national capital region. Nine people were killed and 50 more injured in a terrible metro transit accident when a red line train struck another train. The woman who was the conductor on that train tried valiantly to save her passengers. She died as a result. Well, we went to the funerals, we listened to the people, and we always say: We will never forget, but we do. Well, I didn't forget and the Maryland delegation didn't forget. BEN CARDIN didn't forget, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN didn't forget, and DONNA EDWARDS didn't forget. We worked very hard in creating legislation. The first thing we did was listen to the National Transportation Safety Board that gave us recommendations and said there was not only a failure of Metro being fit for duty, but all of the transit systems in America face this kind of risk where there is a failure of technology, the

failure of cars to be crash resistant, the failure to have exit doors, and the failure to have a black box.

When you look at the Congress, we are the failure. Give us an F because we have safety standards for how you open a bottle cap but not how you open a subway car in a disaster. So it wasn't Senator BARB making up safety rules on her own; we went and listened to the National Transit Safety Board. I put in legislation to give the Federal Transit Administration the authority to establish and enforce national safety standards for Metro. We had aggressive oversight hearings. Metro leadership initially was dragging its axles, but I wouldn't take no for an answer. We shook up the management, we shook up the board, and now I want to shake up the Congress.

I want to thank Senator BOB MENENDEZ. He had a parallel bill. I want to thank TIM JOHNSON, the chair of the committee. They have taken my ideas and have actually done a version of their own, and working together we have come up with a great solution that has bipartisan support. This checklist for change that I insisted on would replace the oldest cars in the fleet. It would develop real-time automatic controls so that technology would have redundancy in it. It would develop a training and certificate program so that the personnel not only know how to operate their cars but what to do in the danger zones. Runaway cars make a great movie. Denzel Washington did that one, but I don't want to see another movie where there is another transit system that went through the horrific accident here in the national capital region.

In this checklist for change legislation, working again with Senator MENENDEZ, my colleague Senator CARDIN, whom I cannot give enough credit to, our new bill gives the Transportation Secretary, Mr. LaHood, authority to establish and enforce safety standards, and allows Federal funding for these safety improvements. I am pleased that this was inculcated.

The story goes one step farther, and this is an example. Last year, through the appropriations, I was able to get funding, working with Senator MURRAY, to be able to replace the Metro cars, the ones that are old, dated, and cannot withstand all the problems I just enumerated.

I am going to tell you the rest of the story as if Paul Harvey were on the floor. A couple of weeks ago during one of our work weeks when we were visiting our constituents, I went to a place called Knorr Brakes in Carroll County, which was once very rural. Knorr Brakes actually makes the brakes for these Metro cars and makes the brakes for Amtrak and makes the brakes for many transit systems in the United States of America. Because of the improvements at Metro, they have been able to hire more people.

I wish you could have walked that factory floor with me. It is not your

grandfather's factory floor, which was often dark and dangerous. It is clean, uses the best of engineering, a few robots, engineers, with skilled blue-collar workers who are machinists who are working on this very specialized equipment. These brakes have to work, and they are the best in the world. Workers in Maryland are the best in the world. Yes, they are part of a German holding company, so we are ready to be global, and at the same time they are fixing not only Washington's Metro but they are working on transit systems.

My whole point is smart funding in the area of infrastructure and in transportation safety creates American jobs. Every time we modernize our transit fleet, we are building railroad cars in the United States of America. Many of those brakes that will go on that car will be made in Maryland by Maryland workers, competing with other American companies. And you know what. That is what it is all about. That is smart funding that creates safety and creates jobs.

I want to thank the Banking Committee for including this, and I also want to thank all three committees: Banking, Environment, and Public Works, under the leadership of Senator BOXER and Senator INHOFE, Senator BAUCUS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator TIM JOHNSON, and my colleague from Alabama, Senator SHELBY.

This could be a great day. This could be a great day or a great week. But, yes, while we are working on the payroll tax and its temporary holiday, the real thing we could get done this week is to pass this legislation. America will be safer, our economy will grow, and it will be a win-win situation.

Madam President, I want to thank you for your kind attention. I want to thank all my colleagues who worked on a bipartisan basis. We actually listened to each other. I had a set of ideas. Others had as well. Some had flashing lights about costs, we went back and forth, and that is the subject of negotiation, and we were able to do it. I think we have come up with a great bill for surface transportation. We have come up with a great bill for transit safety, and I am going to be happy to vote for it. Let's get Congress rolling so we can get our economy rolling.

I yield the floor. I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor because of a new report that has come out by the chief economist of Gallup, the polling organization, dated today, February 15, 2012. The headline is: "Health Costs,